"What is the Solution to California's Transient Labor Problem?"

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(mimeographed)

To those who are not in the field of public health or of public welfare and who get only cursory information second-hand from the tongues of gossips, are in a very poor positio to understand the enormity of the problem which has been heaped upon agricul ural counties of the state by the tremendous influx of transients from the dustbowl area of the United States...

Many loose statements have been made relative to the factthat certain areas in California have been advertising for laborin the dustbowl area. To date no proof has been brought forth that any advertising has ever been seen by anyone. In other words a disgrunteld few have made misstatements about California's problem with the transient in an ttempt to cloud an issue by charging that they are brought into the state at the behest of growers themselves...

One of the best illustrations of difficulties which present themselves with these people that I can offer is one of the famous Dozier clan which came from Oklahoma and were broke on arrival. In October 1936 and shortly after arriving in the state, they spent three weeks of rest in the Arvin FSA camp near Bakersfield. After resting and getting filled up as far as physical requirements were concerned, this clan proceeded to Madera county and early in November all 42 of them were discovered in atwo room cabin living under almost unbelievable co ditions. This bad situation was broken up and immediately after breaking it up, the people making up the clan began presenting the county with cases of typhoid fever. A total of eleven cases of typhoid fever occurred out of the 42 in the clan. ..the economic loss produced by the eleven cases of typhoid fever presented to the county of Madera b the Dozier clan was $11,000. This is only one of the many incidences that could be enumerated, if time and space permitted...

On January 29th, 1938, 27 cases of smallpox were discovered on the west side in Madera county in one camp. Since that time to June 2nd, 1938, there have been 44 cases. Every case of smallpox that developed in the county with the exception of one case..developed among individuals from Oklahoma. The presence of smallpox in the county of Madera necessitated avaccinatio campaign wherein 9,000 individuals were vaccinated of which number 75% were from the dustbowl area... Eighteen-thousand dressings were done on arms of those vac inated. In other words two visits had to be made on each individual vaccinated; arms had to be inspected and re-dressed.

Five hundred cases of measles have occurred in the cou ty, also approximately 500 cases of mumps, as well as 250 cases of chickenpox. Eighty percent of the individuals contra ting these diseases came from the dustbowl area and particularly from Oklahoma...

The charge has been made that he dustbowl horde have brought their diseases in with them. This statement is not altogether true. However, it may be

definitely stated that due to malnourishmnt which is not the product of one generation, but of several hundred years of bad living finds these people are in a low state physically...

Because of religious scruples, superstitions and many other things that can be classed as taboos, active preventive measures against certain diseases which may be prevented becomes unusually hard...

Proper housing facilities have been provided by many of the growers in the San Joaquin Valley for labor working in agriculure. Because of the shiftlessness of the individuals who occupy cabins on ranches some of the most unbelievable conditions have been found. These conditions are not to be blamed on the growers, but on the people themselves, they having lived in scualor for many generations. To cite instances would take too much time, therefore only one instance will be reported.

As the health officer of Madera county...I have stressed the advantage of one room cabins over the two or three room cabins that have been provided in some instances. My reason for stressing the one room cabin has been that the individuals occupying these abins are not appreciative of the efforts put forth for their welfare. At one beautiful camp in Madera county wherein the grower and owner against my advice, built three room cabins because he felt that from a humanitarian standpoint ~~xxx~~..they would be better. ...he did not reckon with theindividuals who were to occupy thecabins. Recently, I made a trip of inspection into this camp..., I found the cabins in an unbelievable condition; partitions hadbeen torn out and used for firewood, filth of allkinds, including human excreta were found on the floors of various rooms of the cabins...

"Sob-sisters" of both male and female varieties have complained that one room cabinswere not satisfactory, yet it has been the observation of this office that even though two or three rooms ar provided that one room is usually the only one used. It seems to be traditional with these people to live, cook, eat, and sleep all in the same room and no particular attention is paid to numbers who may occupy the one room. I have seen as many as ten individuals, including father, mother, children, aunts anduncles all living together in a cabin 12 x 14 and apparently quite happy. It is recognized that such a conditions is not ideal and far from being what it should be, but on the otherhand when one has to deal with a people whose cultural and environmental background is so bad that for a period of more than three hundred years no advances have been made in living conditions among them and ethnically they are as far removed from a desire to attain the privileges which present day culture and environment offers, then they were in the days before the Revolutionary War. To many this indictment may seem too severe, but to me it ismot severe enough. The poor white of the United States has lived in close proximity to an advancing civilization and culture for several hundred years and yet outwardly has made little orno advance.

Public health officials and welfare workers are doing all in theirpower to point out to these pwople the advantages of sanitation, cleanliness and disease control measure,but tono apparent avail. It is hoped someday that something may be accomplished...

It may be said safely that 95% who have arrived in California from Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas and southwestern Missouri were in a destitute condition at home and immediately upon arrival in the state began appealing to welfare agencies for help...

The migratory laborer, or fruit tramp, as he has been commonly referred to, belongs to a group known as State homeless, he is actually a citizen of California. His labor is worth while and necessary to the harvesting of seasonal crops. Migratory labor, however, has been very much upset in the past few years due to the rapid influx of outsiders into the State... The people who have moved into the state from the dustbowl area and particularly from Oklahoma, Texas and Arkansas have moved into it with their minds fully made up to remain. Themajority of these people are not qualified mentally, physically or economically to own land or to farm it...

It is my earnest conviction that camps wherein proper disciplineis maintained and wherein men are made to realize that unless they give a full day's honest labor, their families will suffer may bring results not gotten heretofore. A dole handed out without effort on the part of the individual receiving it amounts tonothing more than the lowering of the morale of the individual getting it...

In America today it seems that Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest, has been relegated to the limbo of thepast and the unfit are on top because without effort on their part they are given the cream, while those who actually possess a desireto do an honest day's work and to get themost out of their efforts are given only skimmed milk...

It has been my observation that surplus commodities as at the present time doled out, donot offer in any measure to the people who are receiving them, sufficient dietaryvalue to bereckoned a factor in the buildingup of their bodies and thus preventing mal-nourishment. ...a piece of fat meat, some beans, tomatoes, flour, potatoes, dried fruit and oranges are the main items given out... Because of gorging many have had to receive medical attention at the hands of physicians. I fully realize that the above mentioned surplus commodities offer in some measure to the hungry man and woman the sameresult that a tightenedbelt might offer to one who is starving. In other words, their minds are taken off of the fact that they are not receiving food absolutely necessary to keep up their physical well-being, but are receiving a diet which will keep the body and soul together and is filling.

(more)

... A little while ago, I wrote a letter to the Surgeon Generalof theUnited States Public Health Service and suggested that it might bewell to have allof those who seek to enter California under the lassification of agricultural labor examined for venereal diseases before they are allowed to enter the State and also submit to an examination for tuberculosis before being admitted. Inreply the Surgeon General wrote that such a mathod as advanced by me was not practical and that it would entail too much expense. I am not in agreement with the Surgeon General in this matter, because I believe that any expense gone to at the present time to top the migration of people into the State of California, who, for years to come, will be classed as undesirables, can be too great. Money must be spent and every effort must be made if the State is to overcome evils which are at the present time thrusting themselves like a hydra-headed monster upon every economic enterprise in the State of California...

Individual Californians must be made to herald the fact to the rest of the United States that California does not need any more labor and that those who have already arrived in the State hinking it an Eldorado have been grievously disappointed and are having a hard time eking out even a poor existence. Welfare organizations furnishing relief to transients who are indigent and who represent the majority cannot e expected to expend any more money for relief than that which has already been spentunless they wreck the counties dispensing it and the State as well.

There are those who many not e in agreement with all that has been stated in this discussion, but let me point out that the things that have been said have notbeen said loosely but are the result of many years study of the problems as they are beginning now to present themselves in the State of California...